



REMEMBRANCES OF DEREK DIAMOND

Dr Nancy Holman of the Department of Geography & Environment remembers Professor Derek Diamond, who died on 6th May 2015.

In the course of one's career it is common to come across excellent educators, incisive researchers, strong administrators and tireless champions of students and alumni – however, it is rare that all of these qualities are encompassed in one individual. It is therefore with great sadness that the Department of Geography and Environment and the Regional and Urban Planning programme mark the passing of Emeritus Professor Derek Diamond.

Derek joined the School in 1968 taking over the Urban and Regional Planning programme, which had been founded two years earlier under Professor Sir Peter Hall. He directed the MSc and PhD in Planning until 1979, during which time he touched the lives of countless students from across the world. Many of these alumni who either were taught by Derek during his time as director or later generations who were led through the streets of London on his famous walks have written to us to express their deep sadness at his death but also their desire to celebrate his life as an educator, mentor and friend.

In his later career Derek also served in increasingly important administrative roles within the School. He directed the Greater London Group from 1980-1995 and was the Convenor of the Department of Geography from 1983-87 and 1990-92, an Academic Governor from 1983-87 and Vice-Chairman of the Academic Board from 1988-1993. He was also instrumental in the foundation of the Gender Institute serving as its Interim Director from 1993-94.

Derek was also a well-respected academic crossing the fields from planning to geography, considering himself to be an applied urban geographer. His standing in the field was reflected in his chairmanship of the Regional Studies Association (1974-76), his presidency of the Institute of British Geographers (1994) and the numerous journals upon which he served as editor.

The Department would like to extend our deepest sympathies to his wife Esmé and his two children, and to the countless generations of planners that he trained with such enthusiasm, wisdom and kindness. He will be missed by us all.

**Former Director Regional and Urban Planning Programme
Professor Michael Hebbert**



“Taken on the rooftop above Houghton St before the 25th birthday party of the URPS programme, this photograph shows Derek glowing with summer health, whether from a Mediterranean break at his Catalan seaside villa or just the sunshine of Walton-on Thames enjoyed at evenings and weekends in the green arcadia to which he and Esme invited so many generations of LSE students, colleagues and academic visitors. Derek was a sunny man in every sense, humorous, hospitable and generous with friendship, time and knowledge. Many of the memories shared since his death have used the word ‘mentor’. He certainly was to me. Derek took exceptional care to teach the customs and practices of the School and help me find my feet when I first arrived at LSE in 1979 and he was equally helpful as I took over as URPS programme director, and succeeded him as secretary of the Greater London Group and editor of Progress in Planning. None of these transitions would have gone so smoothly were it not for Derek’s remarkable knack of giving timely advice. Thinking back on it, two points stand out. First was the evidence of careful preparation manifest in the neat handwritten memoranda on slips of paper and cardboard he would tuck into his wallet. Second was the friendly tone of Derek’s voice. I can hear it as I write though its agreeable quality is hard to describe, involving as it did a unique method of voice-production that involved clearing his throat and speaking at the same time. The qualities that made him such a good mentor to us as individuals also explain his success as an institution-builder at LSE, the RGS, TCPA and elsewhere. Two of his favourite words were ‘colleagues’ and ‘collegiality’ and he lived out those values to the full. Truly, a friend to remember with affection and a life and work to celebrate. “

Former Director Regional and Urban Planning Programme
Professor Andrew Thornley

“Derek was the rock on which the RUPS programme was built. His enormous energy and enthusiasm transformed it from a new fledgling enterprise into an established programme of international renown, attracting highly qualified candidates from all quarters of the globe. His friendly and considerate nature produced a particularly pronounced solidarity and loyalty from all students who took part. The alumni created an important network in the planning world and continued to maintain regular contact with Derek and the School.

So Derek was a central figure in the creation and development of RUPS and also in the wider life of the LSE. He was also central to my own association with the School. I had decided, in mid career, to undertake a part-time PhD. I was accepted at the LSE and went along to my first tutorial in Room S420. There I met Derek for the first time – he was to be my tutor. Working full time meant that I found it difficult to find any prolonged time to develop my research and so, with many ‘periods of temporary suspension’, it took me eight years to complete. The positive side of this was that I was able to establish a strong rapport with Derek. He was always very kind and gentle as I struggled to get any research done and full of positive encouragement. As a part-timer dashing in for an hour from work the LSE always seemed a rather intimidating place but the atmosphere that Derek created in S420 always provided a relaxing environment that was conducive to our stimulating discussions.

Many years later, when Michael Hebbert decided to move on, the vacancy arose to take on the Directorship of the RUPS programme. Derek returned to my life. He encouraged me to apply and his support was critical in giving me the confidence to do so. Having been appointed I discovered that I was to occupy my revered S420! On my second day in the job I met up with Derek for lunch in the Senior Common Room. I was amazed as it seemed that he was friendly with every single person there. It was probably not far from the truth and says a lot about the kind of person he was. In my early months as Director these lunches with Derek were a regular fixture. Although he had moved on to other LSE roles his enthusiasm and support for RUPS never diminished. Understanding the way the LSE operates is very difficult as a newcomer and so Derek’s knowledge about its decision-making, personalities and politics was absolutely essential. His willingness to give his time and friendly encouragement was endless. Over the years that followed he continued to take an interest in the programme and was very keen to meet up with the students. He returned to take them on his famous guided walk every year. Invariably his engaging and enthusiastic teaching style impressed the students greatly and they would ask if he could give them further talks. So from the very early years to the very recent past the RUPS programme has been imbued by Derek’s spirit and vitality.”

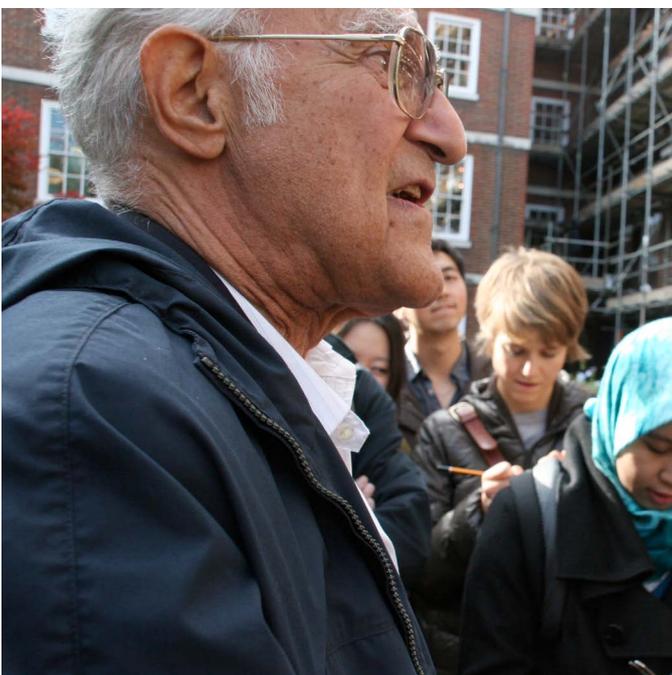
“Derek always showed his smile was my first thought. He arrived at LSE just when I completed the MSc Planning course led by Peter Hall, and Peter left. I took a post at the Architectural Association School of Planning, and we soon established that radical planning course working with community and trade union and liberation groups. Recruiting a staff largely from the LSE, Derek supported us all the way along the delivery of that course and stood up solidly when we resisted its closure. Along the way Derek took the bold step to publish one of the first books on Chinese urban planning to follow the ‘Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution’. That arose from our joint LSE, SOAS, AA tour in 1973, with contributions from Meghnad Desai and Hilary Rose. Derek and I shared a passion for walking tours in London, revealing links between the economy, the social structures, the spaces and struggles, and the architecture. City walks will not be forgotten by the many who walked with Derek. I am fortunate to continue leading LSE study tours from The Bank out through Docklands and along the south bank, and remember Derek as I walk and talk. Like Derek I look forward to the beers offered by the students in the pub at the end of our journey.....so here’s to Derek!

Nick Jeffrey”



“During my year 1976/77 at the LSE MSc course in Urban and Regional Planning Studies I experienced Derek Diamond as very engaged teacher, who was absolutely interested in the academic progress of his students. He not only managed that all students of the course ended this year successfully despite their different cultural, national, academic and professional backgrounds. During this time he enabled us to come in contact with a wide range of academics and professionals. At the same time Derek was a friendly and open minded person who allowed other standpoints and differing arguments. As a young left academic from West Berlin I was quite impressed by his tolerant and relaxed attitude which influenced my professional and political thinking in the following years more than I had expected. I had to accept with strong regret that our last inspiring meeting at the LSE in October 2014 could not be continued here in Berlin as he originally intended.

Günter Schlusche“





(showing f. l. t. r: Martin Stott, DD, Richard Oram, Günter Schlusche LSE Oct 2014)

“Derek was an avuncular figure who gave the impression of having ‘seen it all’. LSE at the time I was there (1976/77) was still considered a radical redoubt (probably more because of its convenient proximity to Fleet Street than anything that actually happened) and it was the days of the launch of the SWP, student sit-ins and in the case of us MSc students, the refusal to take exams. Derek handled these bumps on the road with aplomb and diplomacy. For me, his influence was crucial in my professional development. I had just returned from a trip to China - Chairman Mao was still alive and the Cultural Revolution was coming to an end. Amongst many other string to his bow he was editor of the TCPA journal Town and Country Planning at the time and he happily took an article on Chinese city planning from me while I was still a student. It appeared in the December 1977 issue. He commissioned a whole series more, five in the next two or so years, on a number of subjects. Almost forty years later I am still a regular contributor. This is a reflection of the man; dynamic, wide ranging in his interests, encouraging of students, a promoter of debate, and engaged with the real world beyond the groves of academe. He was a towering figure in planning who straddled theory and practice, and was a great communicator to students, academics and the wider public. He will be much missed.’

Martin Stott”

“Coming to LSE in 1976 affected my life, but Mr. Diamond changed it profoundly. I enjoyed the MSc and he helped me get support to stay on. With his guidance I wrote a report that he published in Progress in Planning. So validated, it was circulated in the US and my success flowed from that, thus Derek. My “independent” work was “for him” as much as anything. More than the best teacher I ever had, I know many of the 600 students he guided benefitted similarly from his dedication.

Richard L. Oram”



“Derek Diamond was probably the first person at LSE who greeted me when I arrived in 1970. He also turned out to be one of the most memorable teachers I ever had. The years passed, and I returned for a reunion in 2013. Again, at a reception, it was Derek who reached out and greeted me. It was just his personality. He made a young student feel welcome, and he made an aging alum happy to be back. He is missed.

Richard George”

"I would like to extend a big thank you from the Haratsis family and the rest of the Australian crew for his major contribution influencing the shape of our cities.

Brian Haratsis"

"He was such a nice man and I remember my conversation with him about ISLAMABAD, which was designed by a Greek city planner. Please offer his family my deepest and profound condolences.

Iftikhar Shallwani"

"Would like to pass on her sincere condolences to Derek's family he was a true inspiration to us all.

Suzanne King"

"I have very fond memories of the walks with Professor Diamond. He was an inspiring man who spoke with passion and insight.

Hala al Akl"

"Even if I did not have him as a teacher at school any more we had a lovely walk together and he accompanied our class to our trip to Istanbul. I remember very well his lively descriptions and explanations during the walks in London and Istanbul.

Jutta Jungwirth"

"I want to send my condolences to his family and to all of my classmates. I will remember him as a inspiring man and very good professor. Rest in peace.

Yliana Perozo"



"He was a real inspiration and will be missed.

Kath Scanlon"

"I remember our walking tour around the City with him and liked his warm and friendly manner. He even came for a couple of pints with Jimmy and me afterwards.

Adam Carter"

"My sincere condolences to the family he will be greatly missed.

Clara Braggio"

"I would like to extend my deep sympathies to the family. Derek was an inspiration.

Roger Chan"

"Mr Diamond led many student generations to become better professionals and human beings.

Miguel Molina"

"A great life purpose that he accomplished outstandingly. We and many other will miss his absence. He was a great man, a very qualified academic, and generous to his students. We will all miss him a lot.

Tania Castro"

"Derek was not only an outstanding academic, but more importantly was a generous and kind man who did a lot to give his students opportunities that helped them to change and shape their lives. Please pass on our condolences to his Family.

Tony Zeilinger"

"All those who had the opportunity to receive lessons from, and the congenial and helpful attention of Professor Diamond, as I did, can only deeply regret his departure.

Walfredo Antunes de Oliveira Filho"

"Sometime in the 1997/1998 RUPS course, Derek took our class out on one of his memorable urban tours which was so fascinating to all (especially to non Londoners). His ability to describe London's evolution - from Roman times to the arrival of barristers, royalty, media moguls and financiers etc, with each developing particular sub environments - was captivating. After so many years I, as I am sure all course mates, still have clear and fond memories of Derek and his teachings.

Daniel Shotton"

“Derek convinced me to study at the LSE and I always thanked him for his contribution to my decision.

Gideon Lerman”

“Such sad news. I met Derek on one of his famous walking tours at LSE and had the honour of working with him during my time at the Town and Country Planning Association. A true gentleman and an inspiration.

Nancy Parry”

“I first met Prof. Derek Diamond in September, 1970, just before I started my MSc in Regional and Urban Planning. In a very friendly manner, he asked me why had I chosen to study at LSE and particularly why was I interested in regional and urban matters, and after explaining to him my motives, he encouraged me to do my best, since I was the first Mexican student to be admitted in the course.

After a year of intense study, when I returned to Mexico, I felt very proud to have obtained the degree! Some years ago, I received an invitation to participate in a Reunion with LSE regional and planning alumni in London. Among the diverse activities, the one I most enjoyed, was the walking tour led by Prof. Diamond around the LSE surroundings. I discovered so many interesting things I did not know about London—a city I love—thanks to him! I felt truly amazed by his profound knowledge of history, physical energy and great enthusiasm. The last time I met Derek Diamond was in 2013 at the School, during a very lively cheese and wine party, organized by the LSE Alumni Relations team, for the LSE alumni 1970-71. There I had the opportunity to chat with him and the LSE Director, Prof. Craig Calhoun, together. I shall really miss Derek Diamond and will always be grateful for all I learned from him!

Jarmila Olmedo Dobrovlny”

“Derek Diamond was truly a legend and clearly a lynchpin of the Urban and Regional Studies program by the time I arrived from Vancouver, Canada for the 1983-84 Masters year. A couple of memories stand out. Firstly, I believe he might have been the one to suggest our class trip to Snowdonia and Carnarvon (in winter!) (or was it Michael Hebbert? In any case, a great, if chilly trip!) Secondly, he seemed to always be there for our drinks nights and animated discussions at the very classy Beaver Bar (which we Canadians always thought was built especially for us.) PM Margaret Thatcher was in the process of demolishing the Greater London Council (in battle with Red Ken, later Mayor of London!) and the regional councils, so it was a crash course in local/regional government for all of us. I still have my SAVE THE GLC button. I went on to start my own consulting business in environmental and urban planning (32 years and counting!), on the foundation of this excellent program, which was headed up by Derek at the time. Best wishes to family and friends of this lovely man, who clearly left his mark on the world.

Susan Abs”